853 A child is nursed for two or even three years, and theoretically, a woman should abstain from sexual intercourse throughout this period. In practice, however, the period of three months mentioned above is the limit of such abstention.

854 Childhood. While he is small, the child remains with his mother, whether she cares for him herself, has him cared for by a slave especially designated for the duty, or turns him over to one of her daughters.

During the nursing period of two or even three years, he is carried astraddle by his mother or some other person entrusted with his care until his legs are strong enough for him to run about the house and its vicinity.

857 At about six or eight years old, he is drawn into the juvenile organization known as n-tomo, and he never fails to join it as soon as he is welcome. Little girls are less free; they are kept at home and put to work at household duties, such as bringing water and wood and watching the fire.

881 Puberty. As we shall see, the n-tomo prepares the child for the soli, a ceremony which marks the most important event of his life, civil puberty. The essential but not the only rite involved in this ceremony is circumcision. In principle, the soli is limited to pubescent boys and this implies that all who go through the ceremony have physically reached puberty. Aside from the fact, however, that this condition is reached at differing ages, the boys who undergo the ceremony differ in age because the soli does not take place every year, owing to the considerable expense involved.

882 When the soli is behind him, a boy is no longer a child; he is not exactly a man either, but rather is a "young master," a kamalen'. Since he is admitted to the brotherhoods, apparently his discretion can be counted on, and he is considered competent to take an oath so he can be called upon to testify in a dispute. Also, if he is enterprising enough to attract attention to himself, he is given trifling missions which inspire him to persevere. Furthermore, since by now he has been made sophisticated by his companions in the n-tomo, his relations with his female companion

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882 in the [216] soli, the n-golo-moso, and with other girl friends
836 are not merely platonic; indeed, sexual licentiousness is common.

As in everything else, a girl's life is more restricted. For her, the soli is merely a way of being presented to society, as we would say, that is, a means of attracting a prospective husband.

884 Coming-of-age, guardianship, deprivation of civil rights. It is obvious from the above that a Bambara has no way of knowing his age with any certainty. At best, he can estimate it by referring to some important event known to have occurred at about the time of his birth.

Since this is the case, we can see that coming-of-age has no correlation with chronological age. The individual's physical development and, still more, his intellectual maturity are signs that lead his family to grant a kamalen' the rights that distinguish a man from a boy. The most important of these rights is assuredly that of taking a wife and founding a family.

As a matter of fact, the soli marks the point after which the young people of both sexes are deemed competent to contract
582 marriages. Indeed, girls of 16 or 18 years of age and boys over 25 are rarely unmarried. It should further be understood that a girl may be betrothed at birth or even when she is being carried in the womb, as has been explained above.

429 Guardianship is intended to protect the individual from
562 the follies of inexperience and the natural weakness of the female sex, a weakness to be understood here to include not only actual lack of physical strength but also incompetence imposed by custom which forbids a woman any power whatever over community rights or property. This is why young men are subject to guardianship until the fa, in council, recognizes their right to exercise the prerogatives of man's estate. In principle, women are subject to guardianship throughout their lives.

429 During his married life, the father is the legal administrator of any properties coming to his minor children, and he usually employs such property with discretion since he is legally bound to render an account when the children reach their majority.

521 831 one's eyes, the answer is almost always: "A flé bani, mousoni do, ne na d'ima, ka ké i soungourou yé. But look here, this is a girl; I will give her to you, she will be your soungourou."

521 831 576 ●836 And all this carelessness from the moral standpoint should not surprise us in a country where a crowd of young men greet each other even in the presence of their mothers: "I sounna ko? About the affair of your sleep? And your lovemaking at night?" "I soungourou ka kendé? How is your soungourou?" →

And where young girls do not blush to say to young men: "Do me the favor that I am asking you."

"Ne na ko doumani fo i ye.

I will tell you of a sweet affair (or: conversation, shameful embraces).

"Né na ne ko doumani d'i ma.

I will give you my sweet affair (or: I give myself to you).

In short, every Bambara who awards himself the prize of virtue, avoids saying that he has respected foreign women and girls temporarily under his roof. The statement would be received with a shrug of the shoulders and a smile. He merely says: "I have respected the women and girls of the village," and he does not shout this very loud nor before everybody.

2. Concerning Adultery and Fornication

684 Adultery is a crime in the eyes of every Negro, and the guilty one caught in the act is brought before the council of elders and severely punished. I must state, however, that although adultery seems a serious offence to all, the crime does not lie in the satisfaction obtained. There has been a lack of fairness, the rights of a third party have been violated, and in this lies all the wrongdoing.

Caught in the act, red handed, the guilty party makes a friendly deal with the husband, who rarely asks him for more than 16,000 cowrie shells (from 15 to 20 francs) and the material for a sacrifice to the family boli, comprising perhaps two hens, a goat, two kola nuts, and between 5 to 800 cowrie shells for the sacrificer's bonus.

688 Tjoïna, or Kégné, and the Nama of Misango, Kokodjan, or Guendo. The Djara of Tjikoumela is very popular in Bani country. A perjured Negro offers a gnénama fani, and the fani-n-kolo is costly. For the Komo it consists of two red roosters, two goats, a dog, two red kola nuts, a basket of millet (between 18 and 20 kilograms) and three times 8 kémé (the kémé is worth 80 cowrie shells) if the culprit is a man, or four times 8 kémé if it is a woman. For the Nama the price includes a gourd of honey, two gourds of karité butter, a red hen, two red kola nuts, a basket of millet, and 8 ba (the ba is worth 800 cowrie shells, or one franc), a kémé, and a débé (120 cowrie shells). In addition these are one to two kilograms of salt and a gourd of gnama-n-kou (malagueta pepper: amomum melegueta) for the sacrificer. For the Nia the cost is 12 ba, four chickens, two dogs, and two hens.

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684 837 Adultery is frequent; it occurs daily and is the source of most of the disputes that arise. Some husbands are tolerant, however, and many are satisfied with 2 to 3 ba (between 1, 600 and 2, 400 cowrie shells, or 2 to 3 francs) and victims for a sacrifice to the family boli, such as a hen, a dog, a kid, or two kola nuts.

684 836 Like adultery, fornication is a serious offence because it violates the rights of third parties. It is less serious /163/ than adultery,

684 however, because the Negroes say that although the betrothed girl
• 836 does not belong entirely to herself, neither does she belong entirely to her fiancé; she still retains certain rights to her own person, "à ma di ban, she has not yet been given."

684 When a girl becomes pregnant, she is arraigned before the
627 family council. After a goat has been slaughtered for the family boli, she is asked the name of her partner, and if she refuses to disclose it the council of the elders is called in. She has to yield, otherwise she is tied to one of the forked sticks that support the flat terrace roof, and blows rain thick on her back.

As soon as the guilty man is named, she swears on a powerful boli (1) that she has told the truth, and the man is summoned.

1. It is almost always a Komo, a Nama, or a Kono.

Nothing is to be gained by being a perjurer; it is better to pay the fine and live. The stain on his honor is slight, and he confesses without much shame: "Tigné (that is true); né no do (it is my fault)."

The fine is between 15 and 20 francs and often between 25 and 30 francs (2), not including the sacrifice to the boli, which con-

[583] 2. The rule is that the culprit should pay the fiancé the entire bride price, or some 30 francs.

sists of two hens, two dogs, a goat, and two kola nuts. Quite often the injured fiancé has to be satisfied with the victims for the sacrifice and a small present, one to two kilos of salt, and 800 to 1,600 cowrie shells, or 1 to 2 francs. As for the child of an unmarried mother, its
847 fate is in the hands of the grandmothers, and of the father and the
848 mother, and it quite often happens that it does not cry twice in this
567 world; to use the Bambara expression: "N'a kasira, a t'na foula ké, if he has cried, he will not do it a second time." I am speaking here of a free girl, for the child of an unmarried slave girl is welcome; it is a gain for the house, and no attention is paid to the guilty man. This is easy to understand, for is there a Negro who does not abuse his slave?

837 Such statements simply mean that there is cheating (1) on both

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1. Onanism is very common. Married men tell you openly: "We cannot have too many children, our wives have to go to the markets, and a pregnant woman cannot do this; an b'an dabali ("we manage to avoid having children"). There are few unmarried mothers, and yet the marriage of a virgin is unusual. They have little recourse to abortion, so there is onanism on their part. "Ka bogotigi soro min te djakouma koun don i na yala, to find a young girl who has not fornicated, you will take a walk." It is true that their lovers are often children, who cannot make them mothers.

sides, for all precautions are taken to see that the /165/ mother's breasts do not dry up to avoid the possibility of her conceiving. The soungourou, the widows and divorcées, "real cradle vultures," know how much these precautions weary a young husband, and they come running in large numbers, without shame or modesty.

And while the husband absents himself from his wife for fuller enjoyment, she on her part proves easy with the men friends who visit her or whom she visits, friends who give her the desired enjoyment without ever compromising her. I would go so far as to say that she is glad to find herself deserted, for she might conceive with her husband and then it would be difficult to resort to abortion, while with her friends there is greater freedom.

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847 And if she conceives, a pretext is quickly found for her to go to her mother or whoever takes her place. Three fourths of the old women are past masters in abortions. Camphor in large doses is the basis of their brews, and they know how to use gold chloride for a modest fee; they know how to serve each and every one and safeguard their honor.

584 fourouboloma tigi, or guardian of the wedding gifts, puts on his festive
585 clothes and takes 5 kémé, or 400 cowrie shells, to the father-in-law. The gesture is understood by everyone and means: "When will the wedding be?" A Negro has only one love: his interests; only one affect of affection: himself. In his egotism he thinks only of himself and of receiving cowrie shells; his heart is not unduly stirred. He thinks of his fields, his business, and his stomach. The members of the family, from the oldest to the youngest, have only these words on their lips: "How she handles the hoe! What a good tongue for praising merchandise and selling it; how well she cooks!" And it all stops there, for no one pays heed to her feelings. In vain will she cry that she detests her fiancé, that she does not love him at all, never could love him, and that she prefers another; in vain will she flee the /207/ paternal roof and take refuge with a sympathetic relative; she must obey! Her father and mother have received the oracle of the diviners; in accepting the sacrifice, the family boli have accepted the suitor, and they /the family/ cannot oppose the orders of their gods or, if one prefers the other term, their family fetishes (1).

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1. Custom decrees that the girl spend one night with her fiancé 10 or 15 days before the wedding. Some families dispense with this practice. The whole procedure is carried out in privacy: the girl arrives at night, brought by a member of her family, and withdraws at dawn. The two following expressions denote this procedure: Ou tara di à tjéma ("they have gone to give her to her husband").

Moreover, I must admit that there are very few Bambara women who openly show their antipathy. They cannot resist paternal authority and freely give themselves to the man to whom they have been betrothed; "an ka lada do, it is our custom," they say, and the idea does not occur to them that there could be another.